

Policy: PK 03-11

Policy Title: Tree Inspection Policy

Policy Purpose: Policy to ensure proper management and safety of public trees

Implementation Date: March 1, 2011

Revision Date: NA

CITY OF WESTFIELD PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT TREE INSPECTION POLICY

Trees are a major asset as they add beauty to the City of Westfield (hereafter called City) properties. Trees also save the community money by shading buildings, filtering air, slowing down water run-off and adding to the property values of individual homes. The City of Westfield also recognizes that if trees are not maintained, they can become a major detriment. It is for this reason that the City realizes a need for a Tree Inspection Policy. The Westfield Parks and Recreation Department will implement and manage this policy for the City.

TREE INSPECTION POLICY

1. The Policy

- A.** The City recognizes a need to inspect trees within its managed grounds. The Westfield Parks and Recreation Department (hereafter called Department) intends to inspect trees within the City's managed grounds pursuant to the policy.
- B.** To perform this function, the Department has developed an active policy to maintain the safety of City managed grounds, keeping them free from potentially hazardous trees, by timely removal of any tree or tree part deemed hazardous. To assist in assessing the condition of its trees, the Department proposes to train maintenance and other pertinent staff members on the principles of Visual Tree Assessment (VTA).
- C.** Since the City has limited fiscal and human resources, the removal of high risk trees shall be done on a risk priority basis. The Westfield Parks Director will administer this policy and have the final determination in all matters concerning the mitigation measures to be taken for any tree deemed potentially hazardous.

2. The Westfield Parks Director further determines the following as a Standard of Care related to this Policy:

A. Oversight of Policy: The Westfield Parks Director in overseeing this policy directs the Department to have the day-to-day (or general) oversight of this policy. A report should be prepared for the Board of Public Works & Safety/Tree Board at their Spring Board meeting.

B. Objectives of Policy: The goal of this policy is to protect the residents, city employees, visitors and general public from harm that might be caused by trees on the City's properties, rights-of-way, common areas, grounds and/or other managed properties. To protect the woodland feel of the City's grounds this policy will strive to:

1. Maintain the integrity of the woodland feel that provides beauty to City properties.
2. Increase ecologic benefits to the community in the way of water retention, air cleansing, heat reduction and increased property values.
3. Provide an excellent offset for some of the carbon usage that the City consumes.

NOTE: It should be noted that this policy and standard of care is formalizing the practices and procedures that have been taking place for many years, as the City has worked to provide safe premise.

3. Means of Inspection: Due to the magnitude of the woodland element of the City grounds, this policy will be performed by the use of an internationally recognized technique called Visual Tree Assessment (VTA). The Department proposes to train its maintenance staff members in the elements of VTA so that they can better recognize trees that are structurally unsound and are in need of attention. The Department staff will be required to attend training in VTA prior to starting inspections. Training will be available to other City employees.

A. The Department maintenance staff will use the following VTA outline and inspection document attached (exhibit 1).

1. Visual Tree Assessment: (VTA) encompasses visual and physical assessment for each tree. Typically, the tree is identified, described, and, sometimes photographed. Findings of the assessment are noted with recommended next steps, such as maintenance, follow-up, monitoring or no action. Areas to be assessed for overall tree health and safety factors are:

- a. The ground around the root flare (area where the roots are growing underground)
- b. The root flare itself (sometimes looks like an "elephant's foot").
- c. The hole or trunk of the tree (also sometimes called the stem).
- d. The limb junctions (where limbs branch off of the trunk).
- e. The scaffold branches (big limbs which make up the crown of the tree).
- f. The branches (attached to scaffold branches).
- g. Twigs and fruit that could cause slip and fall accidents.
- h. Miscellaneous hazards, such as thorns, low hanging branch and line-of-sight conflicts that impede the safe flow of traffic

- 2. Red Flags:** A Visual Tree Assessment looks for:
- a. Obviously rotted, dead or decayed limbs, trunks or roots
 - b. Large holes in trunk
 - c. Broken limbs
 - d. Lightning damage
 - e. Storm damage
 - f. Insect infestation
 - g. Wind damage
 - h. Improper trimming or aberrant growth
 - i. Trees too close to the road
 - j. Line-of-sight obstructed by vegetation

B. The City also desires a second level of expertise so it proposes to continue to work with a Registered Consulting Arborist, or the equivalent, to assist in assessing trees that are beyond individual staff members' level of expertise. This second level may include the use of, climbing arborist assessment, drill test or other means as necessary and agreed upon by the Westfield Parks Director.

C. The Department will be encouraged to provide and gather additional information. To do this the Department proposes to:

1. Educate future Park's Board Members, the Tree Board, Department Maintenance Staff, and other City Employees to look for and report tree problems.
2. Place a notice in city newsletters, seeking community comments "We are attempting to regularly inspect our trees so please feel free to alert the Westfield Parks and Recreation Department if you see any tree that raises concern".
3. Place a notice and the Tree Inspection Policy on the Westfield Parks and Recreation Department website.

D. The Westfield Parks Director authorizes and recommends:

1. A twice annual window/or walking inspection by the Department staff with the intent to recognize trees of concern.
2. A window/walking inspection following any major weather event.
3. A bi-annual walking-window inspection by a Registered Consulting Arborist or equivalent.

4. Standard of Assessment: The Department proposes to use the following assessment scale so that trees may be dealt with on a fiscally responsible basis.

A. The Scale:

1. Excellent tree- requires no care
2. Good tree- requires little care
3. Fair tree- may require future attention
4. Poor tree- will require attention as time evolves
5. Trees needing mitigation

- 5-a. ASAP- Needs immediate care.
- 5-b. Needs further assessment by consulting arborist.
- 5-c. Priority- needs care faster than maintenance schedule.
- 5-d. Routine- can be done as part of annual maintenance.

5. Westfield Parks and Recreation Department Tree Inspection Policy Funding:

- A.** Assessment scale number 5's will be scheduled and funded by the Westfield Parks and Recreation's Service Contractual budget and as funding is available.
- B.** Trees with assessment value of 4 will be treated as funds allow.

6. Documentation of History of Care: The Westfield Parks Director determines that this policy should be documented using WestPoint and by establishing a chronological tree inspection policy file in a Tree Inspection Policy (TIP) binder. The documentation should be a progressive file to show the **History of Care**. Documents to be kept are:

- A.** Copies of all invoices for work performed on the trees.
- B.** Documentation of any grants concerning trees or care.
- C.** All Department maintenance staff efforts to inspect and/or mitigate potentially hazardous situations.
- D.** Copies of letters sent, articles published or any other means to educate community.
- E.** Any reports by outside consultants.
- F.** Postings on websites or in utility bills
- G.** Any other notifications.

7. Bodily Injury: In case of an incident with bodily injury the Westfield Parks Director directs the Department Staff to:

- A. Seek immediate emergency care for injured party
- B. Notify Westfield Police Department
- C. Notify Westfield Parks Director
- D. Take photos of the tree (or tree part) prior to removal from incident site.
- E. Complete a Liability Loss Form located in WestPoint HR library of forms in its entirety and notifies the Westfield Parks Director when completed.

8. Media communication: Inquiries from the news media are given a high priority by the City of Westfield and should be directed to the Communications Division as quickly and efficiently as possible. Every effort should be made to ensure that all information which is transferred to the Communications Division is accurate. Responding to media inquiries will be the sole responsibility of the Communications Division and no comments should be made without the assistance or prior approval from the Communications Division.